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## NOTES AND QUERIES.

TUSCAN WITCH SONGS.—At the annual meeting of the American Folk-Lore Society, November 29, 1890, a paper was presented by Mr. C. G. Leland, in which the writer called attention to his discovery of a series of witch songs in Tuscany. Mr. Leland stated that an article of magic, a cord full of knots in which feathers had been tied, having been discovered in England, and pictured in the "Folk-Lore Journal," he had obtained from a fortune-teller in Florence an account of the manner of use of such a "Witches' Ladder." From this same person, and from others, he had subsequently procured a series of magical cures, spells or incantations, stories and songs, relating to witchcraft. Many of these remedies he found to be identical with those recorded by Marcellus Burdigalensis in the fifth century; and further, that the modern remedies were accompanied with incantations wanting in the old Latin. Considering the spells and cures of Marcellus to be of Etruscan origin, Mr. Leland is of opinion that the relics he has obtained present something of the character of the earliest Italian time. In especial, Mr. Leland remarked on a collection of poems made by him, referring to sorcery, and sung to a very slow air in a minor key. Otherwise the compositions resemble prose, though now and then observing measure and rhyme. One of these pieces was given in translation by Mr. Leland, entitled *La Stregha Chitarra*, or "The Witch as Guitar." The theme of this poem is the story of a witch who was transformed into a guitar, which, in sounding, recorded her sorrows of love, this guitar being named *La Magdalena*. After a century, a wizard playing on the instrument retransforms the guitar to human shape. In doing this, he sings to the guitar a *tragedy*, which Mr. Leland regards as the best witch song which he has found, though not the most curious. These songs are confined to a small circle of singers and auditors.

SACRIFICIAL OFFERINGS AMONG NORTH CAROLINA NEGROES.—At the expiration of my term of service in the army I was for several years engaged in cotton-planting in North Carolina, where I had good opportunities for observing the peculiar characteristics of the then recently freed slaves.

I had as an overseer a colored man by the name of Robert Slade, known all through the section as "Uncle Robert." Before the war he had entire charge of one of the plantations of his master, and was a man of much more than the ordinary intelligence and ability of his class. He was a good manager, handled "the hands" well, and only regretted, he often confidentially informed me, that he could not use the whip on the lazy ones, as he used to do; "it would help the work along powerful."

He never would begin a new piece of work on Friday if he could by any means avoid it. I have more than once sent for him on Thursday evening and said to him, "Uncle Robert, I want you to put the men into such a field to-morrow morning," and after his expostulations had failed to convince me that it would be "very bad" to commence the work on Friday, I have

known him to go out to the stables, harness a mule to a plough, and himself go and turn one furrow up and down that field, so as not to begin it on the unlucky day. While it showed his real belief in the ill-luck of Friday, it also showed something more,—his real devotion to my interests as he saw them.

One terribly hot Sunday afternoon, as I was sitting on the piazza, I happened to see at some distance through the pine grove Uncle Robert and his two little grandchildren, and at first could not determine what they were doing. I soon saw that the children were picking up leaves and small sticks, and putting them on a pile under Uncle Robert's direction, and presently I noticed a little smoke rising from it. Wondering what it could mean, I walked out towards them, and saw a pile of leaves and twigs around a small stake, the whole burning by that time quite briskly. "Is n't it hot enough to-day, Uncle Robert, without building a fire? What are you doing?" "I 'se offering a sacrifice." "A sacrifice! what do you mean?"

"Why, you see, Mister Gus, the distemper has got among my chickens, and they are dying off fast. Now when that happens, if you take a well one and burn it alive in the fork of a path it will cure the rest, and no more will die."

I then noticed that he had built the fire in the fork of a footpath through the grove, and remembered that, as I approached, I had heard what sounded like the "peep" of a chicken, probably his last, as it was too late to save him.

The good old fellow was really grieved at my unbelief, and went to work to try to induce me to take a well mule, and burn it alive at the forks of the road to stop the ravages of an epidemic by which I had already lost several horses and mules. He assured me in the most solemn manner that if I would do it, not another one would die. He was so earnest that I was obliged to positively forbid its being done, for fear that, in his zeal for my interest, he might do it without my knowledge.

The foregoing instances of the superstitions of an ignorant race came under my own observation. I am tempted to add an instance from another class which also came under my own observation.

Several years ago a merchant of this city, who had amassed a comfortable fortune, purposed to retire from active business, forming a special partnership with his two younger partners. The plans were carefully made, the papers all drawn, and the partnership was to commence on the first day of December. A few days before that date he came out of his private office with the papers in his hand, and, going to the elder of the junior partners, said with great earnestness, "I 've just discovered that the first of December comes on Friday, and I can't sign these papers and commence the new business on that day. It must in some way be changed." No arguments could prevail on him; he absolutely refused, and the date was changed, at considerable inconvenience, to December 2d.

This man was well known in the best business and social circles of Boston,—a man of more than ordinary culture and refinement, a man who, more fittingly than most men, could be called a Christian gentleman.

We sometimes — often — wonder at the superstitions of the ignorant ; what have we for the superstitions of the educated ?

*Joseph A. Haskell.*

**NURSERY RHYMES FROM MAINE.** — The rhymes which follow were formerly obtained in Maine, by James Russell Lowell, and communicated by him in the month of June, for the purpose of publication in this Journal. It could then, alas ! have been anticipated that the lines would never meet the eye of their collector.

Little Dickey Diller  
Had a wife of siller ;  
He took a stick and broke her back,  
And sent her to the miller.

The miller with his stone dish  
Sent her unto Uncle Fish.

Uncle Fish, the good shoemaker,  
Sent her unto John the baker.

John the baker, with his ten men,  
Sent her unto Mistress Wren.

Mistress Wren, with grief and pain,  
Sent her to the Queen of Spain.

The Queen of Spain, that woman of sin,  
Opened the door and let her in.

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When I was a little boy  
To London I did go ;  
I went upon the steeple,  
My valor for to show.

There came along a giant,  
His head was to the sky ;  
He looked down upon me  
As he came passing by.

He bantered me to wrestle,  
To wrestle, fight, and run ;  
I beat him out of all his play,  
And killed him when I 'd done.

Then the people said,  
If I 'd get him out of town,  
Gold and silver they would give  
When the deed was done.

I took him by the nape of the neck,  
His heels hung dangling down,